

I TOOK IT AS A POSITIVE SIGN

after they read bukowski's poem,
"i am not a misogynist,"

many of my students admitted to me
that they had had to look up
the term in the dictionary.

WHY STOP SHORT?

we've all heard plenty about the
phallic nature of guns and rockets,
submarines, missiles, and mushroom-shaped clouds,

but i never encounter exegeses of the
symbols of trenches, ovens, and mass graves.

nor does anyone ever mention that the horrors
of the twentieth century have coincided with
(though i would be the last to suggest a causality)
the rise of explicit female political power.

ONE TO WHOM IT IS NOT A JOKING MATTER

owner of a base-model hyundai excel,
which, with my afflictions of the feet,
knees, back, shoulders, and elbows,
i am often hard-pressed to operate,

i say, "my next car is going to have
automatic transmission, power steering,
power brakes, power windows, maybe even
an ejection seat with a parachute. maybe
i'll even get me one of them rehab vehicles
with a hydraulic lift.'

"good," my wife says, "with a car like that
you should be able to drive yourself
to all your doctors' appointments, maybe
even to the hospital."

"in which case," i say, "maybe i won't
have to drive myself home."

"but with a great car like that," she says,
"you'll be able to drive yourself
to the cemetery."

"naturally," i retort, "but by then you will, of course, have personally chauffeured me to the poor house and the nut house."

for my wife and me this is just good wholesome dark humor, though not without its edge of truth,

but i notice on the face of my daughter, who loves me and depends on me, the same first slap of reality that i experienced when, at her age, i asked my father how long he thought he would live, and he said, "oh, according to the statistics, i'll be lucky if i last five more years," and the medical odds-makers had that one figured right on the money.

F.A.D.D.

someone brags to me that his compact car has a 1.7 liter engine, while my new hyundai, my first-ever brand-new car, has only 1.5 liters.

i don't know what he's talking about or even whether in this game a high score wins the game for you or loses it,

but i certainly want to have the last word, so i retort, with more truth than fiction,

"yeah, but my car has a 1.75 liter driver."

WEIGHING THE RISKS

"look," i tell chris daly, "i gave the guy a buck-fifty tip on a four-fifty fare — that was a thirty-three-and-a-third percent gratuity, and he was still pissed off at me."

"gerry," says chris, who is himself a cabbie, "what do you expect: the guy is first in the airport line and